



Connecticut Department of Public Health

Testimony Presented Before the General Law Committee

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**Commissioner Renée D. Coleman-Mitchell, M.P.H.
860-509-7101**

Senate Bill 13, An Act Expanding Economic Opportunity in Licensed Occupations

The Department of Public Health (DPH) supports the Governor's proposal, Senate Bill 13, An Act Expanding Economic Opportunity in Licensed Occupations. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this important issue.

Section 1 of this proposed bill would require agencies that issue occupational licenses to report to the Secretary of the Office of Policy and Management (OPM) regarding online licensing. The bill also requires each state agency that issues occupational licenses to establish an online renewal option for license categories with more than fifty licensees.

Public Act 07-185 required DPH to establish and implement an online license renewal system for physicians, dentists and nurses, effective July 2008. Since that time, the Department has expanded the online renewal service to many additional licensed healthcare professions. Currently, 86% of the individuals licensed by DPH are able to renew their license online. Additionally, 96% of all current licensees are in professions that can submit initial applications for licensure online.

The Department has focused its efforts on transitioning those professions with the highest number of licensees to online occupational licensing. DPH is continuing to reconfigure the licensing system for the remaining occupational licensing categories, which include: emergency medical services (EMS) personnel, water treatment plant operators, water distribution system and small water system operators, backflow prevention device testers, cross-connection survey inspectors, asbestos abatement professionals, lead abatement professionals, sanitarians and subsurface sewage installers and cleaners. The Department is also transitioning healthcare facility licensing to an online process.

DPH also supports the language in Section 4 of the bill, which clarifies that internet-based or distance learning opportunities to complete educational requirements related to initial licensure or renewal of a license are permitted. This section still allows for hands-on learning to be used in clinical training, site visits or other experiential learning opportunities.

***Phone: (860) 509-7269,
410 Capitol Avenue - MS # 13GRE, P.O. Box 340308 Hartford, CT 06134
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Section 6 of the bill calls upon several state agencies, including DPH, to review and recommend to the Secretary of OPM measures to reduce or eliminate barriers to participation in licensed occupations upon the submission of the report from the Council on the Collateral Consequences of a Criminal Record established by Public Act 19-142. DPH supports such review and recommendations upon receipt of the Council's report.

DPH has no blanket policy that would disqualify someone with a criminal history from obtaining a license, and does not require a criminal background check as part of the license application process. The Department adheres to the considerations outlined in CGS Section 46a-80(c) when assessing criminal histories of licensure applicants.

Indeed, DPH's long-term care background check program, established pursuant to CGS Section 19a-491c, currently delineates a process for individualized assessments of waivers of potentially disqualifying criminal offenses based upon criteria similar to that contained within subsection (c) of CGS Section 46a-80. DPH looks forward to working with the other state agencies identified in this proposal to support this important initiative.

Finally, the Department supports Section 8 of the bill that would allow individuals who move to Connecticut, or are military spouses that move to a military installation in this state, to be licensed in Connecticut if they hold a valid license in another state. The criteria for licensure outlined in Section 8 generally align with existing qualifications and practice for endorsement of an out-of-state license, but will ensure that these provisions apply to all licensure categories.

Thank you for your consideration of this information.